

Message Text

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ACTION SNM-02

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O R 231045Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3533
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 1462

LIMA FOR S/NM MS. FALCO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR, BM
SUBJ: HIN OO AMPLIFIEDS STRATEGIC CONTEXT OF NARCOTICS CONTROL
PROGRAM

REF: (A) RANGOON 1118, (B) RANGOON 1413, (C) LIMA 4158

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO COLONEL TIN OO, HE PERSONALLY AND THE
GUB ARE READY TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO A MAJOR EFFORT TO CLEAN THE
NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS OUT OF THE BURMA-THAI BORDER AREA, AND TO KEEP
IT CLEAN. IN THIS EFFORT, BURMESE ARE NOW CAUTIOUSLY HOPEFUL
REQUIRED DEGREE OF COOPERATION WILL BE FORTHCOMING FROM THAI.
GUB REQUESTS FOR FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT IS ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESS
OF THIS EFFORT, WHICH INVOLVES FERRYING IN SUBSTANTIAL BURMESE
POLICE ELEMENTS TO AUGMENT AND FOLLOW UP MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST
TRAFFICKERS. IN ORDER TO PERMIT HIM TO ASSURE HIS SUPERIORS THAT THEY
COULD AFFORD TO BACK THIS LONG RUN STRATEGY, TIN OO SEEMED TO
ME TO BE SEEKING ASSURANCES U.S. WOULD PROVIDE THE ANTICIPATED
ASSISTANCE. HE
MADE A STRONG PLEA THAT WE ALLOW NO MISUNDERSTANDINGS,
REGARDING BURMESE INTENTIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, OR ANYTHING
ELSE TO DAMAGE OUR COMP RATION#AND PLEDGED TO DO HIS BEST

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TO CLEAR AWAY ANY QUESTIONS OR DOUBTS THAT MIGHT ARISE TO
THREATEN COOPERATION. TIN OO APPEARED GENUINELY GRATIFIED
(CERTAINLY MORE THAN SATISFIED) WITH THE CANDOR AND FORTH-
COMINGNESS OF ASSURANCES CABLED US BY MS FALCO FROM LIMA.
I BELIEVE THIS EXCHANGE HAS PUT OUR WHOLE PROGRAM ON A
SOUNDER BASIS. END SUMMARY.

1. I CALLED ON PRESIDENTIAL MILITARY ADVISER COLONEL TIN OO AT HIS REQUEST SATURDAY MORNING, MAY 21, TO INFORM HIM OF THE STATUS AND PROSPECTS OF OUR COOPERATION WITH THE GUB IN ITS ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT, AND ESPECIALLY AS REGARDS THE GUB REQUEST FOR FIXED WING AIRCRAFT. I BEGAN BY READING PERTINENT PORTIONS OF RECENT CABLES:--THE EMBASSY'S TELEGRAPHIC REPORT ON THE BOURNE-FALCO VISIT, MY REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE FOR THE PRESENT MEETING, AND MS. FALCO'S RESPONSE (REFTELS). MS FALCO' CABLE, AND THE FACT IT HAD BEEN DRAFTED BY HER IN LIMAJ VISIBLY IMPRESSED TIN OO.

2. TIN OO RESPONDED WITH A LONG MONOLOGUE ON THE HISTORICAL AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT OF OUR COOPERATIVE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT. ONE PRINCIPAL FOCUS OF THIS MONOLOGUE PERTAINED TO THAI-BURMESE COOPERATION, WHICH HAS IN THE PAST (TIN OO SAID) BEEN SEVERELY LIMITED DUE TO THE ORGANIZATIONAL VULNERABILITY TO CORRUPTION ON THE THAI SIDE, WHICH IN TURN HAS STEMMED IN PART FROM THE ENTRENCHED AUTONOMY OF THE THAI BORDER PATROL POLICE (BPP). IN THE PRE-NE WIN ERA, TIN OO SAID, THE BURMESE HAD A SIMILAR PROBLEM BECAUSE THE ENFORCEMENT AGENCY WAS THE "UNION MILITARY POLICE", WHICH WAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE HOME MINISTRY, AND NOT CONTROLLED BY THE DEFENSE MINISTRY. DURING THE FRECENT VISIT TO BURMA OF THAI GENERAL KRIANGSAK, WITH WHOM TIN OO HAS A BROTHERLY RELATIONSHIP, THE TWO MEN REVIEWED THIS PROBLEM, AND TIN OO RECOMMEDNED THAT THE BPP BE PLACED UNDER THE THAI SUPREME COMMAND. ABOUT A WEEK AGO, TIN OO SAID, THIS ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE WAS EFFECTED, AND THIS IS A VERY POSITIVE OMEN FOR THAI-BURMA COOPERATION.

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3. A SECOND MAIN FOCUS OF COLONEL TIN OO'S PRESENTATION HAD TO DO WITH THE SPECIFICS OF THAI-BURMA COOPERATION AND THE ROLE OF U.S. ASSISTANCE. RECENT EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT IN ORDER TO CLSUN OUT THE NARCOTICS REFINERY-STORAGE AREA ALONG THE BURMA-THAI BORDER, TWO THINGYARE NECESSARY: NOT ONLY THAI-BURMA COOPERATION, BUT ALSO A FORCE THAT CAN OCCUPY AND PATROL AN AREA AFTER AN INITIAL MILITARY OPERATIONS. OTHERWISE, AFTER A BURMA ARMY EFFORT SUCH AS OPERATIONS MOHEIN I AND II, THE TRAFFICKERS SIMPLY FLOW BACK INTO THE SITES, AS SOON AS THE ARMY PULLS OUT. UNFORTUNATELY, THE ARMY HAS OTHER PROBLEMS TO COPE WITH BESIDES NARCOTICS. COLONEL TIN OO'S STRATEGIC PLAN IS TO FORM APPROPRIATE AUXILIARY FORCES FFROM THE POLICE MANPOWER WHICH IS NOW AVAILABLE BECAUSE OF THE IMPROVED LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN METROPOLITAN AREAS OF BURMA, AND USE THEM IN COORDINATION WITH ARMY UNITS IN BORDER AREA ANTI-NARCOTICS CAMPAIGNS. THE POLICE COMPANIES WOULD GO IN WITH THE ARMY BUT REMAIN IN PLACE FOR THE NECESSARY PERIOD OF TIME

AFTER THE ARMY HAD GONE. THEY WOULD ALSO BE AVAILABLE FOR FOLLOW-UP ENFORCEMENT TASKS SUBSEQUENTLY, BUT WOULD NOT BE LEFT IN PLACE PERMANENTLY. THE UNITS WOULD ALSO BE USED, TOGETHER WITH OTHER CIVILIAN GROUPS, IN POPPY-ERADICATION CAMPAIGNS.

4. THE ROLE OF THE RECENTLY REQUESTED FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT IN THIS STRATEGY IS IN THE FERRYING-IN OF COMBINED ARMY-POLICE UNITS TO AN OPERATIONAL AREA. AND THE RAPID MOVEMENT OF THE UNITS FOR SUCH SPECIFIC TASKS AS POPPY ERADICATION, AND RELATED LOGISTICAL FUNCTIONS.

TIN OO SAID THERE ARE MANY AIRSTRIPS AROUND THE COUNTRY THAT CAN HANDLE PORTER AIRCRAFT AND WHICH COULD, WITH A SLIGHT EXTENSION OF THE RUNWAYS, ACCOMMODATE THE DESIRED TYPE OF STOL AIRCRAFT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 RANGOON 1462

5. ONE IMPORTANT PART OF THE CONTEXT OF THE FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT REQUEST THAT EMERGED FROM OUR MEETING WAS TIN OO'S VERY STRONG FEELING THAT HIS OWN PERSONAL FUTURE WITHIN THE GUB AS WELL AS THE FUTURE OF OUR COOPERATIVE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT DEPENDS UPON THE SUCCESS OF THE NEW STRATEGY HE DESCRIBED. HE AS MUCH ASSAID THAT HE IS GOING OUT ON A

LIMB VIS-A-VIS SAN YU AND NE WIN, BETTING HEAVILY ON HIS FAITH THAT GENERAL KRIANGSAK WILL HELP HIM BRING ABOUT EFFECTIVE COOPERATION ALONG THE THAI-BURMA BORDER, AND THAT WE WILL SUPPLY AT LEAST THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF THE NECESSARY TYPE OF AIRCRAFT.

6. THE DEGREE OF ASSURANCES WHICH I WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE, ON THE BASIS OF THE REFERENCED EXCHANGE OF TELEGRAMS, EVIDENTLY APPEARED TO TIN OO AN ADEQUATE BASIS FOR MOVING AHEAD. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE TRIP OF COL SHWE THAN (WHOM TIN OO IDENTIFIED AS TEAM LEADER), COL MYO AUNG, COL KO GYI, AND MAJOR TIN MAUNG WAS A KEY LINK IN HIS STRATEGY. HE INTENDED TO MEET WITH THE GROUP ON MAY 23 TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF THE TRIP, AFTERWHICH HE WOULD PRESENT HIS PROPOSALS TO THE "LEADERS" (I.E., PRESUMABLY INCLUDING GENERAL SAN YU AND PRESIDENT NE WIN). COMMENT: I INFERRED FROM THIS STATEMENT THAT TIN OO HAD PROBABLY NOT YET, AS OF MAY 21, OBTAINED FINAL APPROVAL FOR HIS NEW STRATEGY, BUT WOULD PROCEED TO DO SO ON THE BASIS OF OUR DISCUSSION AND S/NM'S ASSURANCES.
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7. FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT COLONEL TIN OO IS TAKING A POSITIVE LONG-RUN PERSPECTIVE ON OUR COOPERATIVE PROGRAM WAS PROVIDED BY HIS EFFORT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE HAD AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BURMA. HE SAID THAT THERE ARE NO POLITICAL DETAINEES IN BURMA. PEOPLE STILL IN JAIL FROM THE U THANT RIOTS WERE THOSE DULY CONVICTED IN COURT OF SPECIFIC ILLEGAL ACTIONS. MANY HAD BEEN RELEASED AND A REVIEW WAS UNDER WAY TO PERMIT THE RELEASE OF STILL OTHERS. RESTRICTIONS ON PASSPORT ISSUANCE TO BURMESE CITIZENS WERE REFLECTIVE PRIMARILY OF CONCERN FOR BURMA'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE STRINGENCIES. WHEN THEY LET PEOPLE GO ABROAD, THEY TENDED TO SPEND MONEY. HAN OO EMPHASIZED THAT HE WAS ANXIOUS TO AVOID ANY PROBLEM OVER THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, AND HE URGED US TO BRING DIRECTLY TO HIS ATTENTION ANY HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM THAT

AROSE; HE PROMISED TO GIVE PROMPT AND AUTHORITATIVE ANSWERS TO ANY QUESTIONS WE MIGHT HAVE. I ASSURED TIN OO THAT BURMA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD DID NOT SEEM LIKELY TO IMPEDE OUR COOPERATION IN THE ANTI-NARCOTICS PROGRAM; BUT IF A PROBLEM AROSE, I SAID I WOULD TAKE HIM UP ON HIS OFFER.

8. STILL OBVIOUSLY IN AN EXPANSIVE MOOD, TIN OO REAFFIRMED

OUR EXISTING UNDERSTANDING WITH RESPECT TO DEA PERIODIC VISITATIONS. WHILE THE GUB HIGHEST AUTHORITIES HAD CONSIDERED THE MATTER AND DECIDED THAT A PERMANENT DEA PRESENCE WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME, HE (TIN OO) COULD ASSURE US OF

FULL COOPERATION TO MAKE THE PERIODIC VISITS A SUCCESS.

9. COMMENT: TIN OO'S AUTHORITY IS STILL, OF COURSE, DERIVATIVE FROM HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GENERAL SAN YU AND PRESIDENT NE WIN, SO ANY COMMITMENT FROM HIM MUST BE SUBJECT TO THE CONTINUANCE OF THAT RELATIONSHIP. I WOULD JUDGE THAT THE RELATIONSHIP IS CURRENTLY QUITE SOLID. CORRESPONDINGLY, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE OUTLOOK FOR OUR PROGRAM, AND FOR THE DEGREE OF THAI-BURMA COOPERATION NECESSARY TO THE SUCCESS OF OUR OWN EFFORT, IS ALSO SOLID. TIN OO IS PROBABLY COUNTING ON GETTING AN INITIAL INCREMENT OF FIA-WING AIRCRAFT

CAPABLE OF THE KIND OF FERRYING MISSION HE DESCRIBED,

PERHAPS AS MANY AS FOUR, BY THE END OF NEXT FISCAL YEAR. IF THESE AIRCRAFT ARE FORTHCOMING, I WOULD SAY WE WILL HAVE MOVED OUR COOPERATIVE PROGRAM INTO A NEW AND HIGHER DIMENSION. OSBORN

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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